

The Oxfordshire Tobacco Control Strategy 2020-25

Summary

In 2018 the Oxfordshire Tobacco Control Alliance (OTCA) was formed. This is a partnership of local organisations who are committed to working collaboratively to eliminate the use of tobacco in Oxfordshire. As part of the work of the OTCA a tobacco control strategy has been developed which aims to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Oxfordshire to below 5% by 2025, 5 years ahead of the national ambition. The strategy outlines a wider whole system approach to elimination of tobacco use. A public consultation on the draft strategy was held from 11th March- 12th April. This paper outlines the key aim of the strategy, the consultation process and recommends the approval of the final strategy.

Information on Tobacco Use

Smoking is the single greatest cause of premature death and disease in our community. Every year in England more than 80,000 people die from smoking related diseases. This is more than the combined total of the next six causes of preventable deaths, including alcohol and drugs misuse. On average a smoker loses 10 years of life.

Between 2015-17, 2,132 people died from smoking related causes in Oxfordshire. Likewise, the impact of smoking on ill health is huge. In 2017/18 and estimated 4,036 hospital admissions in Oxfordshire were attributable to smoking.

In Oxfordshire, in 2018 an estimated 10.1% of adults were smokers (England 14.4%) which equates to approximately 54,804 smokers across the County.

The Oxfordshire Tobacco Control Strategy

Tobacco control is an umbrella term often used to describe the broad range of activities that aim to reduce smoking prevalence and/or reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and the morbidity and mortality it causes. In 2017 the Government published its Tobacco Control Plan for England 2017-22¹ to pave the way for a smoke free generation. When the prevalence of smoking is below 5% it is considered that the population is smoke free. The national aim is to reduce the prevalence of smoking to below 5% by 2030

The key aim of the Oxfordshire strategy is to reduce the prevalence of smoking in the adult population to below 5% by 2025 and make Oxfordshire the first smoke free County in England.

Oxfordshire in line with many areas has primarily focussed on smoking cessation services. With the prevalence of smokers in the County at 10.1% we need to adopt a different approach which addresses the wider underlying issues surrounding smoking if we want to see tobacco use eliminated in Oxfordshire.

With our overall adult population now approaching single figures the strategy presents an ambitious vision which employs a wider whole system approach to

¹ Department of Health (2017) Towards a smoke-free generation: a tobacco control plan for England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-a-smoke-free-generation-tobacco-control-plan-for-england>

eliminating tobacco use from our communities. To achieve this wider whole system approach the strategy employs four pillars:

- Prevention
- Local regulation and enforcement
- Creating smoke free environments
- Supporting smokers to quit

Public Consultation on the Strategy

The OTCA were keen to engage with the public on this ambitious strategy. A consultation on the strategy was launched on 11th March 2020 which was National No Smoking day. A high-profile launch of the consultation took place which included a press event which included all six local authority leaders and senior officers from Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford University Hospitals Foundation Trust and Oxford Health Foundation Trust. This press event attracted attention from local press and media including the local BBC television news.

In addition to this the consultation was widely marketed on social media to sign post the public to the OCC consultation webpages where the consultation was hosted.

The public consultation ran from 11th March – 12th April and 227 people responded to the consultation. It is acknowledged that the events of Covid-19 may have impacted on the public engagement to the consultation but the OTCA are grateful to the people who took time to respond to the consultation.

When asked about the vision of a smokefree Oxfordshire by 2025, 65% of the respondents supported this vision, 31% were against it and 5% were neutral.

Positive comments from the respondents to the strategy followed the following themes

- People don't like being exposed to the smell, health impacts of cigarette smoke when out in public.
- Improvement in the air quality in public spaces. Fresh/clean/pleasant environment. Less litter from butts.
- Recognition of health impacts on individuals (relatives), a healthier population and the NHS.
- Protection of those respiratory conditions
- Protection of children
- Smokefree should be free and not only less than 5%.

The negative comments from respondents to the strategy included the following themes.

- Removal of people liberties to smoke at all. Approach is dictatorial, controlling, a "Nanny State"
- Not considered a priority compared to other issues, such as pot holes, homelessness, adult social care, outdoor air quality.
- Belief that the Council does not have the powers or moral mandate to lead on public health measures (tobacco)

- Unintended consequences, more people smoke inside around children, people will do drugs instead,
- Removal of “joy” from peoples lives.
- The plan is too ambitions and not achievable.

Respondents were invited to contribute ideas on how to address smoking. The following views and ideas were offered.

- Any approach to be educational and encouraging.
- There were concerns around the approach alienating people who smoke.
- People were keen to prevent young people starting smoking.
- Other issues such as drugs, such as cannabis or links to vaping should be considered alongside this strategy.
- Ideas included ones which had a national reach, such as film ratings where smoking is present, controls on the sale of smoking products, dedicated support from midwives and health visitors to help pregnant women and their partners who smoke.

Recommendation

The OTCA Tobacco Control Strategy creates a strong foundation to achieving the ambition for a smoke free Oxfordshire by 2025. The strategy has been broadly welcomed by the public and partners across the County. The Health Improvement Partnership Board is recommended to approve and sign off the strategy which contributes to reducing health inequalities and improving health for all residents in Oxfordshire.

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